

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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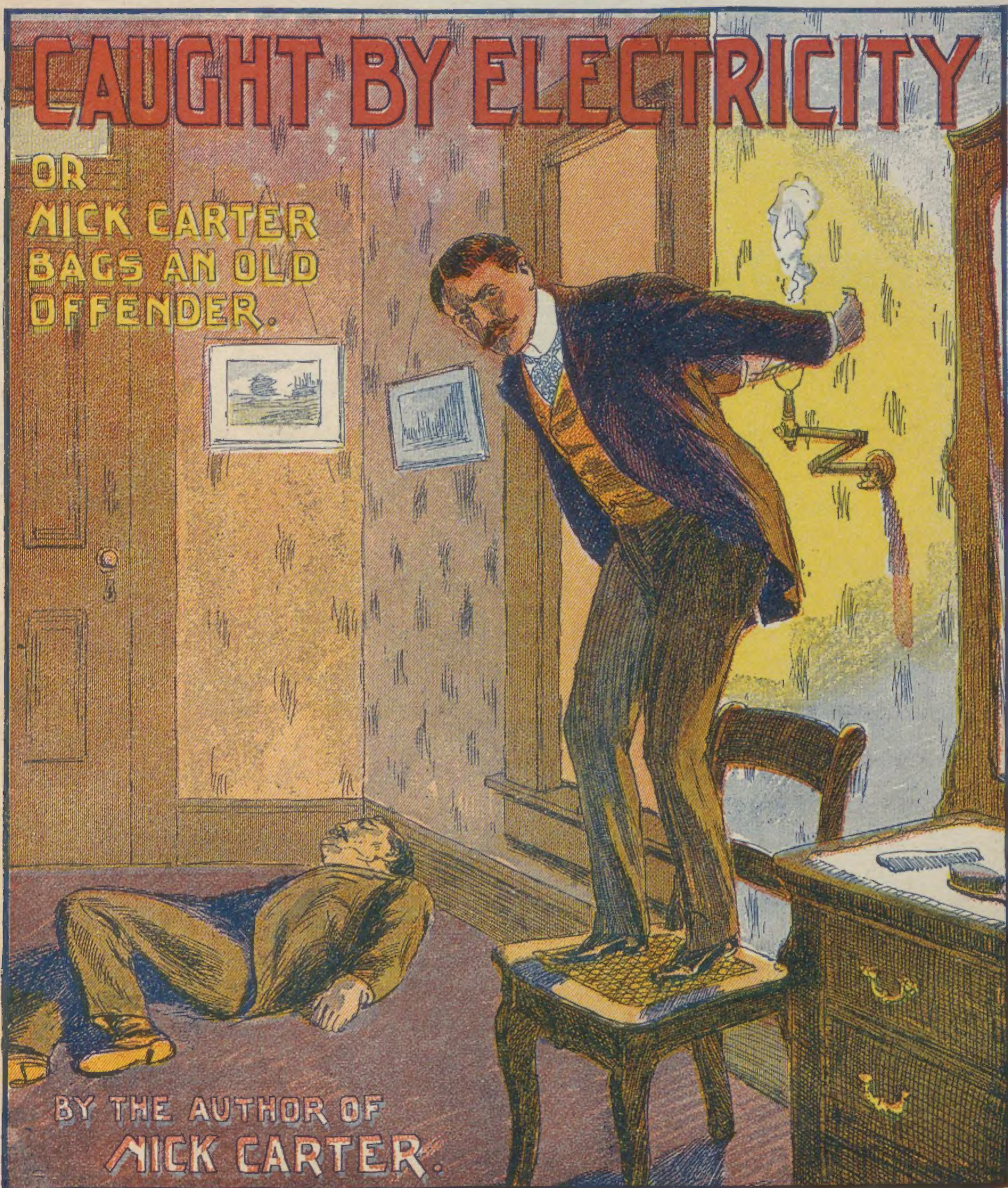
No. 170.

ONE HALF-PENNY

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CAUGHT BY ELECTRICITY

OR
NICK CARTER
BAGS AN OLD
OFFENDER.



BY THE AUTHOR OF
NICK CARTER.

IN A VERY SHORT TIME NICK'S HANDS WERE FREE.

FOUR NEW NUMBERS 1ST OF EVERY MONTH

NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

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Caught by Electricity;

OR,

NICK CARTER BAGS AN OLD OFFENDER.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

EIGHTY THOUSAND DOLLARS SHORT.

"Well, the amount must be charged to me."

"Charged to you?"

The president of the Carrier Creek Lumber and Salt Company looked the manager of the concern squarely in the face as he repeated the sentence given above.

Maurice Dodge, the wealthy president of more than one successful enterprise, had never regarded Ashley Sheldon, the handsome and popular manager of the Carrier Creek Company, with that degree of favor accorded him by the other members of the board of directors. To use Dodge's blunt expression, he had "never had any use for the fellow."

Sheldon had tried in every way to gain the favor of the president, but had not succeeded.

The two men were now seated in the

Chicago office of the lumber and salt company.

The president had just discovered that the manager was eighty thousand dollars short in his accounts.

The manager had just admitted the shortage, but seemed to regard the matter very lightly.

"Yes," he repeated, in answer to Dodge's abrupt exclamation, "the amount must be charged to me."

He was a slim, graceful fellow, with black hair and eyes, and one of those clinging black beards which make the face of the wearer seem pale and refined.

"Charged to you?" thundered Dodge; "you are not authorized to use the company's money for your own purposes. What good will it do to charge the amount to you? The company will still be eighty thousand dollars short!"

"You are wrong, Mr. Dodge."

The president sprang to his feet and

fairly raged up and down the private office.

"Well, of all the impudent rascals," he began.

Sheldon lit a cigar, and elevated his nicely polished shoes to the arm of the chair the president had just vacated.

"Don't say too much," he said, coolly.

"But we want the money. Its loss will ruin the company."

The president wiped his florid face with a huge silk handkerchief as he spoke, and looked like a man who had lost his all.

Sheldon simply laughed.

"My dear sir," he began, "you probably know that I have other interests in the city. Well, this money has in some way become entangled with my other affairs. It is merely a matter of book-keeping. Charge the entire amount to my personal account, and before the bank closes to-morrow night you shall have the eighty thousand dollars in your vault here in the office."

"How can you raise eighty thousand dollars in that short time?" demanded the president.

"I don't have to raise it."

"Humph!"

"I tell you the money is on hand somewhere, and only needs looking up," persisted Sheldon.

"Well, look it up," said Dodge. "I give you until to-morrow night to deposit it in the vault."

"Very well, Mr. Dodge."

The president grasped his cane and abruptly left the office.

Sheldon locked the door behind him and threw himself into a chair.

Now that the strain was over, his old ease of manner had entirely departed.

His face was deadly pale, and wore a haggard look.

"At last," he muttered, "at last."

He sat for a long time with his shapely head bowed upon his hands.

"I can't sit idly here," he muttered at

length. "Something must be done at once."

Taking a number of papers marked "private" from the safe, he closed the private office, announced to the clerks in the outer room that he should not return that day, and hastened away in the direction of La Salle street.

Not far from Washington street he entered a massive stone structure, and took the elevator to the fifth floor.

Everywhere on the street and in the main corridor of the building he was greeted with pleasant words and smiles from the wealthy bankers and business men of the city.

"They wouldn't smile and bow if they knew," he thought, bitterly.

Arriving at the fifth floor, Sheldon entered an elegant suite of offices, where a number of clerks were at work.

The sign over the door read: "Ashley Sheldon, Attorney-at-Law."

Summoning a clerk from the public room, Sheldon entered the private office and closed the door.

He was again the same pleasant, care-free business man who had faced the president of the Carrier Creek Company, a few moments before, in that other office.

"Wilkins," he said, addressing the clerk, "what money has been paid in to-day?"

"A large sum, sir."

"How much?"

"Nearly a hundred thousand dollars."

"Then the Chapin mortgages, which I hold in trust, must have been paid off?"

"They were, and the sum received from the mortgagor was upward of eighty thousand dollars, all in currency."

"Have you received any word from the Chapins?"

"No, sir."

"Let me see," said Sheldon, carelessly, "they are in New York, are they not?"

"That is where we heard from them last, sir."

"Well, put the money into a valise and go to the bank and buy New York drafts with it. It is too large a sum for me to run the risk of holding. I wonder at its being paid in currency."

The clerk bowed, and went away.

Then Sheldon opened another door, and stepped into a small, neatly furnished room adjoining his private office.

A smartly dressed young fellow, who would have been handsome but for the marks of dissipation on his face, was the only occupant of the room.

"Ah, Ash, how are you to-day?"

He laid down a sporting paper as he spoke, and threw himself back in his chair with an air of great weariness.

"Things are a trifle slow," replied Sheldon.

James Mosely laughed sarcastically.

"If things are slow with you," he asked, "what do you think of the shape of my affairs, old fel? I'm flat broke."

"Bad luck at the races, eh?"

"I should say so. Bad luck everywhere."

"Well," said Sheldon, "I got pinched on wheat, nipped on pork, and knocked out on lard. Besides, the devil is to pay in other ways."

"You've been going it at a pretty good pace, old fel."

Sheldon frowned.

"My good and bad luck runs in streaks," he said. "I shall be all right before long."

"I wish I could say as much," said Mosely. "I really don't know where to get the cash for my meals, to say nothing of a stake for the races to-morrow."

Sheldon pondered a moment, and then said, in a husky, uncertain voice:

"I have a scheme, Jim, if you don't mind taking a bit of a risk."

Mosely sprang to his feet.

"Confound the risk," he said. "How much is there in it?"

Sheldon was pale and haggard again.

He spoke with great effort.

"Ten thousand dollars," he said.

"Whew!"

"You can use that much ready cash, I presume," said Sheldon.

"Use it? I should think so! But the risk must be something horrible, old man?"

"Not if you play the game with the same nerve with which you play the races."

"Unfold it."

"A large sum of money was paid in to-day," began Sheldon.

"Yes."

"And, while I have use for every dollar of it, it is liable to be demanded of me to-morrow."

"I don't doubt that you have plenty of use for it."

"You may be sure I have. Well, I have just sent out after eighty thousand dollars in New York drafts."

"Whew! Is there so much money in the world?"

Mosely laughed as he spoke.

"Well," continued Sheldon, "suppose these drafts should be stolen and cashed at some interior bank?"

Mosely regarded his companion in amazement.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"You are slow of comprehension to-day," said Sheldon, impatiently.

"Then talk plainly," was the reply.

"Suppose these drafts were stolen and cashed. You return here with the money, and the paying bank stands the loss."

"But see what shape it leaves me in."

"You can cover up your tracks easily enough. You might have to go abroad for a few months."

"But what interior bank will put up so much money to an entire stranger?"

"I have figured that all out."

"Well?"

"You take the drafts and go to some wealthy Michigan town and introduce yourself as a lumber merchant."

"I see."

"Go to the bank and personate me. Tell the cashier you are a little short of currency. Indorse one of the drafts and have it sent on for collection."

"Yes."

"It will be paid, of course, and then you will have easy sailing with the remainder."

"Good scheme. Then what?"

"After sending one or two of the drafts on for collection, go out and look up pine land. Then draw all the money and come back here."

"But all this will take time."

"That makes no difference. There will nothing be said about the drafts, for I am still supposed to have them in my possession."

"But the paid drafts will come back here."

"Of course, but I shall not be notified. When we have the cash, I can learn in some way of the negotiation of the paper and declare the signatures to be forgeries."

"And then?"

"Why, the bank which cashed them will have to stand the loss, while we shall be just eighty thousand dollars better off."

"You mean you will?"

"You will have your share."

Mosely pondered a moment, and then said:

"I want half."

"You are unreasonable."

"But I might get the money and give you the slip."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Sheldon. "I need the money very badly just now, but I'll give you twenty thousand and make up the rest in a few weeks. Will that do?"

"I suppose so. The scheme is a good

one, and seems safe. All we have to do is to stick together."

"That is all," replied Sheldon, drawing his eyes away from the keen glance of his companion.

"When shall I start?"

"This very night."

"When will the drafts be brought in?"

"They may be in the outer office now."

Sheldon left the room, closing the door behind him.

Mosely arose and paced the floor excitedly.

"It is risky," he muttered, "but I am not in shape to be particular about where or how I get money now. I may have to leave Sheldon in the lurch and take it all."

Just then the door opened again, and Sheldon stepped back into the room.

The New York drafts were in his hand. His face looked haggard and drawn again, but he tried to appear cheerful.

"Here they are," he said, laying the important papers down on the table.

Mosely looked them over carefully.

"They seem to be all right," he said, at length. "I can start to-night, but I must have money to go with."

Sheldon took a roll of bills from his pocket and counted out one hundred dollars.

"Will that do?" he asked.

"I think so. It depends on where I have to go."

"It is not far to the lumber country of Michigan," suggested Sheldon. "Perhaps you had better go to Grand Rapids. There is plenty of money there."

"I'll see when I get there."

Mosely put the money and drafts in his pocket.

"We must trust to each other's honesty in this matter," said Sheldon. "Remember, that we stand or fall together."

"I shall keep my word."

"I have eighty thousand dollars to raise to-morrow," said Sheldon, "but I guess

"I can do it. In a few days, if this scheme works, I shall be out of the hands of the money lenders."

"And I shall be in the wild, wild West," said Mosely.

"Do your work well," said Sheldon, "and you have nothing to fear."

After some further talk, the schemers parted, Mosely going to the depot, and Sheldon returning to the outer office.

"I left the drafts on your table," said the chief clerk, as he stepped into the room.

"All right," said Sheldon, carelessly. "I presume they are all right."

"He's careless with his money," thought the clerk.

"He's mighty sure of me," thought Mosely, a few moments later, as he stepped aboard a train. "I wonder whether he will ever see this money again?"

And Sheldon went away, thinking his money troubles were nearly over!

CHAPTER II.

NICK CARTER BECOMES INTERESTED.

"Nick Carter, by all that's wonderful!"

The great detective raised a warning hand and conducted his friend to a quiet corner of the magnificent club of which he was a member.

"Don't use that name here," he said, "for, while I am known by my own name here, there are very few of the members of this most exclusive club who imagine they have a detective in their midst."

"What are you doing in Chicago?" asked the friend, Jason Boyd, an old school chum and room mate of the famous detective.

"Came up to see the big fair," replied Nick. "Are you located in the city? It seems years since I heard from you."

"Yes, I am here, and in the old business."

"Electricity?"

"Certainly."

"Doing well, I hope"

"Yes. I am superintendent of a plant up here, and am doing well."

As Boyd ceased speaking, a handsomely dressed fellow passed through the room where they were sitting and nodded familiarly to him.

The electrician caught the detective by the arm.

"Size that fellow up," he whispered.

The detective saw a slim, graceful fellow, with black hair and eyes, and one of those clinging black beards which make the face of the wearer look pale and refined.

"That," said Boyd, as the man passed out of the room, "is Ashley Sheldor, a reputed millionaire. What do you think of the fellow?"

Nick looked puzzled for a moment.

"I don't know what to think," he finally said.

"The chap seems to have impressed you in some way," said Boyd.

"Yes," was the reply, "I have seen him before somewhere, and under entirely different circumstances."

"You may have him on your list," said Boyd, with a light laugh.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Nick, soberly.

"Well," said Boyd, "I believe the fellow to be a fraud—a millionaire fraud, it may be, but still a fraud."

"Tell me about him."

"He owns a handsome residence up there in the vicinity of my plant, and he has it wired so that nearly everything about the house can be done by the use of electricity."

"That ought to make the fellow very dear to your heart," laughed the detective.

"It does make him dear to me," was the reply, "but not in the way you mean."

Nick looked mystified.

"As I said before," continued Boyd,

"he uses a great deal of power, but he does not get it from us."

"From a rival, eh?"

"We have no rival."

"Well, then——"

"He claims to make it himself."

"There are many private electric plants, you know," suggested Nick.

"Yes," was the reply, "but Sheldon never manufactures all the power he uses in the little shanty he claims to use for that purpose."

"You think he steals it from you?"

"Yes."

"Can't you find out?"

"It is a hard thing to do. Our wires may have been tapped at some distance from his house."

"I should try, at all events," said Nick.

"There is another thing about the fellow," resumed Boyd. "He says he has invented a new process which will reduce the cost of electricity at least one-half, and this in the face of the fact that he knows nothing whatever about the science of electricity."

The detective smiled, but remained silent.

"I believe he is making money out of the claim, too," continued Boyd, "for I know of several capitalists he has asked to invest money in his discovery."

"Ah!"

Boyd looked up in surprise.

"Does that give you an idea?" he asked.

"Go on."

"There is nothing more to say, except to express the belief that the fellow is an all-around fraud."

"I begin to share your belief," said Nick.

Boyd sprang to his feet.

"Suppose you investigate the fellow," he said.

The detective hesitated.

"I came here to see the fair," he said,

"and I really don't like to get back into harness again."

"It seems to me," said Boyd, "that you might investigate the electrical fraud in a very short time."

Nick arose and took his friend by the arm.

"Let us move around," he said. "We may see more of him. What did you call his name?"

"Sheldon—Ashley Sheldon."

"I have an idea that I ought to know the fellow," said Nick, "but I can't place him."

The two men wandered about the club house for some time before discovering the object of their search.

When they did find him he was engaged in conversation with a young gentleman whom Nick Carter recognized as Fred S. Chapin, of New York.

The detective thought Sheldon looked worried, but as he watched him he saw that he brightened up wonderfully.

"All right," they heard him say. "I'll see about the investment in the morning."

"But," said the young man, "I must have twenty thousand in the forenoon. Don't forget that."

Sheldon smiled, bowed, and passed on.

"I wonder," whispered Nick, "if that is the fellow who handles the Chicago end of the Chapin estate? I hope not, for the sake of the young heirs."

Boyd laughed.

"You begin to suspect him, do you?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then perhaps you'd better work up the electric case. The company will come down handsomely if you catch him, and then your trip to the big fair will cost you nothing."

"I'll think it over," replied Nick.

Young Chapin, who knew Nick in New York as a business man, but not as a detective, now stepped up.

"I am pleased to meet you," he said, taking Nick's hand.

"Looking over the fair?" asked Nick.

"No," was the reply. "Came here on business."

"I think I know the gentleman you were talking with," said Nick.

"Sheldon?" asked Chapin. "Oh, everybody knows him. He has the handling of a good deal of money for Eastern people."

"Yours included?" asked Nick.

"Yes. He's a good fellow, and all right."

"Good financier, eh?"

"First class. He got in eighty thousand dollars for us to-day, and to-morrow most of it goes out again at eight per cent."

Nick moved away and joined his friend again.

They seated themselves in a quiet little alcove, and looked out on the crowded room beyond.

Presently the voices of two men engaged in earnest conversation attracted their attention.

"Did you see Sheldon?" one of them asked.

"Yes."

"He was looking for you early in the evening."

"Yes; he wants more money."

"More money? Why I thought he had money to loan," said the other.

"Well," was the reply, "he wants fifty thousand dollars for a few days."

"Are you going to let him have it?"

"I guess so. His securities are all right."

"What are they?"

"Mortgages, principally."

"His own?"

"They appear to be. At least, they are in his name."

The two men moved away, and Boyd turned to his companion with a smile.

"We are hearing lots about Sheldon to-night," he said.

"Yes," replied Nick, "he took in eighty thousand to-day for the Chapin estate, and still wants to borrow money to-morrow."

"Well," added Nick, "I mean to look the fellow up, beginning on the electrical business."

"Glad of it, old man. I should like to see Sheldon run to earth. He has been carrying things with a high hand lately."

Nick and his friend soon proceeded to the large dining hall, where the members of the club were being amused by the performances of a number of East Indians from the village in the midway plaisance.

Presently a tall, weird-looking fellow, who had been producing immense quantities of fruits and reptiles from his flowing sleeves, turned to a companion and began to make passes before his face.

In a moment the fellow was completely hypnotized.

Before being restored to his normal condition, he was made to do all sorts of strange things.

"Pshaw!" said a gentleman, standing close to the detective's side, "we have a member here who can do that in far better shape."

"Who is it?" asked Boyd.

"Sheldon."

The man's remarks had attracted attention in the little circle, and Sheldon was loudly called for.

That gentleman finally appeared with anything but a pleased look on his face.

"Come, Sheldon," said the man who had first mentioned his name in connection with hypnotism, "I have been telling our friends here that you can discount these East Indians at their own games. Don't make me out to be a liar."

"Yes," shouted others, "let us see what you can do."

Sheldon flushed painfully, but declined to make any experiments.

"I can only do my little tricks under

the most favorable circumstances," he said. "I would not dare try them here."

"Try, try," shouted the members of the club.

Sheldon glanced around the room.

"I don't see a favorable subject," he said.

One of the men pushed young Chapin to the front.

"Try Fred," he said. "He ought to be easy to hypnotize."

"Yes," said Chapin, with a laugh, "try me."

Then, watching the face of the attorney, Nick saw a strange look creep over it.

The eyes brightened and the face flushed.

The attorney's face was the face of a man suddenly possessed of a daring idea.

Nick called Boyd to one side.

"Stop it if you can," he whispered. "It is not best for Chapin to come under that man's influence."

"What do you mean?"

"Remember," whispered Nick, "that young Chapin is here to transact important business with Sheldon."

Boyd stepped into the little circle, but he was too late.

Already the stronger mind was acting upon the weaker.

After a few quick passes, Chapin sank down into a chair, completely overcome.

At the suggestion of the members of the club, who seemed to enjoy the affair hugely, Sheldon caused the unconscious young man to do many strange and comical things, and then he was released from control.

"I never knew a thing about it," he said, with a laugh, when told what had taken place.

Sheldon now seemed to want to keep continually in the young man's company.

"Sheldon is playing a desperate game of some kind," said Nick, a few moments

later, as the lawyer and young Chapin started away together.

"Suppose we follow them?" said Boyd.

"I was about to suggest the same thing," said Nick, "but I don't see how you can be of much use as a shadow."

"You think I will be in the way?"

"Frankly, yes."

"Then," replied Boyd, good-naturedly, "I'll go to the hotel, and you show up in the morning and report progress."

Nick agreed to this, and soon hastened away after the attorney and the young man from New York.

Sheldon had a carriage in waiting, and they were soon on the way to his magnificent home in a northern suburb of Chicago.

Nick, who had secured the street and number of the attorney's residence from Boyd, hired a hack and drove rapidly in the same direction, taking, however, a different street.

The distance was not great, and in little more than half an hour Nick saw the house he was looking for.

It was brilliantly lighted from basement to attic.

As the hack drew near the place the detective saw the light of the attorney's carriage approaching in another direction.

Before long the vehicles crossed each other, and Nick saw that the young man from New York was still engaged in earnest conversation with Sheldon.

While in the hack, Nick had made an entire change in his appearance, and when he dismissed the vehicle and walked carelessly down the street toward the Sheldon residence, no one would have recognized him as the elegantly dressed gentleman who had spent the evening at the club.

He was now a very plainly dressed mechanic, with oily, bushy black hair and a scraggly black beard.

The detective never traveled without at least one complete disguise with him.

This, in a great measure, accounted for his wonderful success.

It was after midnight, and there was no moon, but the sky was clear and the stars gave a dim light.

Selecting a suitable place, where he would be free from observation, the detective settled down to watch the house.

"Chapin will undoubtedly remain with his seeming friend all night," he thought, "but I may get some idea what they are up to by waiting."

Presently the lights in the house began to die out, and before long the one in the front parlor was the only one in sight, except those in the servants' room above. The shades were not drawn, and Nick could see the two men sitting by a table.

In a moment Sheldon drew a long leather pocket-book from his coat and began counting out money!

"Surely he is not going to pay him money at this time of night," thought the detective.

But that is just what Sheldon was doing.

Before long the men arose, and Chapin pocketed a large roll of bank notes. Then he moved toward the door.

Sheldon called him back for a moment, and then an aged man, who looked like a coachman, entered the room and wrote something on a narrow slip of paper that was lying on the table.

"He is witnessing a receipt," thought Nick.

This was exactly what was taking place.

Sheldon had paid Chapin the sum of twenty thousand dollars, and had taken a witnessed receipt for it.

Then Nick began to understand what was being done.

He crept out to the street, and secreted himself behind a clump of evergreens which grew between the walk and the curb.

Before long the door was opened, and

the two men walked toward the little suburban railway station, not far away.

"If you must go to-night," Sheldon was saying, "you will have but a short time to wait for the train. It always stops here."

"There is nothing to detain me," replied Chapin, "now that I have received the money I came after. By going to the city now I can get off on an early train."

The men parted on the next corner, or, rather, seemed to part, for Sheldon followed stealthily along after his client.

Nick saw him making rapid passes.

In a moment Chapin paused and drew his hand across his forehead.

Then, as if moved by some uncontrollable impulse, he wheeled about and started toward the Sheldon house.

Sheldon himself darted away and passed inside.

As Chapin passed the detective, Nick saw that his eyes were closed, and that he made his way along the smooth street like one walking in sleep.

"He is under Sheldon's influence," thought Nick, "and will be made to return the money without taking up the receipt."

Nick knew that hypnotism had frequently been used as a means of perpetrating crime, and he had no doubt that Sheldon was using his influence over Chapin to rob him.

"Gabrielle Bompard," thought the detective, "murdered Gouffe in Paris while acting under the direction of Eyraud, and, in California, Livernash nearly murdered Ethridge while acting under hypnotic influence which was self-imposed."

When Chapin reached the front door of the house the lights in the parlor were extinguished.

Sheldon was no were in sight.

Chapin paused a moment at the steps leading to the porch, and Nick crept forward to his side.

The detective's position was between

the house and the hypnotized man, and he was not in sight from the open doorway, as was Chapin.

He could hear a shuffling of feet in the dark hallway, and knew that Sheldon was there watching his victim.

Just then the sound of wheels was heard, and the hall door was softly closed.

Chapin groped around a moment, and then reached forward in the direction of the open newspaper box fastened under the shelter of the porch. Nick saw that he had a roll of bank notes in his hand.

CHAPTER III.

A TIPSY VISITOR.

"If he drops those bank notes in that box," thought the detective, "it will be a long time before Mr. Ashley Sheldon gets his hands on them."

In a moment Chapin's hand reached the box.

Nick heard him feeling around for a moment, and then saw him turn away.

The passing vehicle was now directly in front of the house, and the door remained closed.

Nick reached his hand in the box and drew out the money.

Then he darted away toward the corner of the building in his rear, and gained the shelter of a bunch of evergreens.

In another moment he was in the street.

In the meantime Chapin had proceeded down the walk, and was staggering across the street.

Nick hastened to his side, caught him by the arm, and drew him away toward the spot where he had left his hack.

At that instant the door opened, and a faint shaft of light crept out on the porch.

Then Sheldon made his appearance.

Nick saw him reach his hand toward the box.

A moment later he drew back with an exclamation of surprise and rage.

"He expected to find the money there," thought the detective, with a smile.

Sheldon darted toward the street, and Chapin tried to draw away from the side of the detective.

He was still under the influence of the attorney.

Nick grasped him firmly by the throat, and held him back by main strength.

Sheldon stood there for an instant in the dim shaft of light, waving his hands as Nick had seen him wave them in the street and at the club house.

Chapin made a faint effort to get away, but did not succeed.

He struggled for an instant in the strong grasp of the detective, and then became a dead weight in his arms.

He had fainted.

Nick heard Sheldon searching along the street.

"He wonders why he did not find the money in the box," thought the detective, "and is likely to continue his search for Chapin for a long time."

Taking the unconscious man in his arms, Nick proceeded down the street at a swift pace.

Chapin was little more than a child in his arms.

Stopping now and then, to make sure that he was not followed, Nick hastened to the hack and deposited his burden on the seat.

"Faith," said the driver, "it's quare things yees pick up in these parts."

"Are you acquainted up here?" asked Nick.

"Only so-so," was the reply. "I have a customer who lives forninst the corner there."

"What's his name?" asked Nick.

"Sheldon."

"I know him well," said Nick. "Nice fellow."

"It's a gay boy he is," replied the hackman. "Many's the time I've brought

him home wid the sun risin' out of the lake."

"He's rich, and can afford to go to bed when he likes," said Nick.

"Rich, is it?" demanded the hackman. "Faith, thin, he'd better be afther payin' me little bill."

"How much does he owe you?" asked Nick.

"Tin dollars."

"Do you ever expect to get it?" asked the detective.

"Sure an I'll take five for it," was the reply. "He's owed me many a day."

The detective saw a chance to make a point.

"See here," he said, "I'll pay you the ten dollars if you'll take me to the place where you pick him up when he's out nights."

"I'm yer man, mister."

"But first," said Nick, "I want you to remain here and take good care of this man while I look around a little."

"What's the matter wid him?" asked the hackman.

"He was taken sick a little while ago," was the reply.

The hackman grunted suspiciously, but made no reply.

"If he wakes up and wants to go away," continued Nick, "you hang to him. He is not responsible for what he does to-night."

The hackman looked as if he thought the detective was another man who did not know what he was about.

He pocketed the ten-dollar note, however, and did not say what he thought.

"Now, don't get tired and go away," concluded Nick; "the longer you stay here the more pay you'll get."

The hackman nodded, and Nick walked away in the direction of Sheldon's residence.

"I may as well find out what I can about the place, now that I am up here," he thought.

When he got back to the vicinity of the house the door was still open.

Sheldon was yet out searching for his victim.

All was quiet in the hallway, and, after a moment's deliberation, the detective stepped softly inside.

The hall and the parlors opening from it were elegantly furnished, and many handsome and costly works of art were scattered about.

Nick stepped into the back parlor, and looked about for a place of concealment.

As he did so, a heavy step sounded outside, and then a sturdy form appeared in the doorway.

"Mr. Sheldon!"

Nick concealed himself behind the heavy portiere, and waited.

It was evident that one of the servants had heard him enter.

"Mighty strange doings," muttered the fellow, after a moment, the front door open, and no one in the front of the house."

Presently quick footsteps were heard on the walk leading to the street, and then Sheldon's voice was heard.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"Andy, sir," was the reply.

"Have you been here ever since I went out?" was the next question.

The serving man unhesitatingly replied in the affirmative.

He thought more of his situation than he did of the truth.

"Very well," said Sheldon. "You may lock up the house and go to your room."

The servant went away, and Sheldon threw himself into a chair and took a bundle of papers into his hand.

"Everything works against me," he muttered. "I thought I was sure of that fellow. Only for that cursed team, I should have had the money in my hands at this moment."

Nick, standing like a statue behind the

portiere, smiled as he felt the roll of bank notes in his own pocket.

The detective had been very successful so far, but he now found himself in an uncomfortable position.

He was not ten feet away from the attorney, and could not move without attracting his attention.

Sheldon worked away at his papers, and Nick stood impatiently in his hiding-place for at least an hour.

Then there came a light tap on one of the front windows.

Sheldon started, and bent his head forward in a listening attitude.

The noise was repeated, and the attorney went to the front door and opened it a trifle.

"What is it?" Nick heard him ask.

The reply was too faint to be heard from the hiding-place of the detective.

In a moment the door was opened about half way, and the man outside stepped into the hall.

"What do you want?" demanded Sheldon.

"As I said before," replied the newcomer, "I come from Mosely."

Nick saw the attorney start, but he soon recovered himself and led the way into the front parlor.

"This is a strange time for Mosely to send any one to me," he said. "Why didn't he come himself?"

"I don't know, sir."

The newcomer was well dressed, but his manner was coarse and disrespectful.

He looked and acted like a man who had been drinking heavily.

"Tell me what Mosely said," said Sheldon, with a strange quiver in his voice.

"He said he got full and lost the papers you gave him."

Sheldon sprang to his feet and paced up and down the floor, once or twice coming within a foot of the hidden detective.

"My God," he exclaimed. "It don't seem possible."

The messenger lolled back contentedly in his luxurious chair and gazed critically about the room.

"What else did he say?" demanded Sheldon.

"He said you was to come to him at once."

"Did he tell you what the papers were?"

"No; but I found out."

"How?"

"He got broke gambling, and tried to shove one of them."

Sheldon's face was a picture of misery and rage.

"The miserable fool," he almost shouted. "He shall pay dearly for his carelessness."

The bearer of the unwelcome news looked the attorney impudently in the face.

"I guess he'll come out all right," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I know what he was going to do with the drafts."

"Well?"

"I know all about the scheme."

Sheldon laughed hoarsely.

"I don't care what you know," he said.

"Mosely has probably been telling a lot of lies to shield himself."

"I guess not."

"Where did you leave him?"

"At the C. O. D. club."

"I'll go there at once."

"And have him arrested, I suppose," sneered the fellow.

"What's that to you?" demanded Sheldon.

The messenger braced himself up after the fashion of drunken men.

"I'm goin' to stand by him," he said.

"That's very kind of you," said Sheldon, "and, in the meantime, you will kindly get out of my house."

The fellow sprang to his feet with an oath.

"You'll pay for this," he shouted. "I'll make you sweat for those words. The whole story shall be told in the papers to-morrow."

"You are drunk," said Sheldon. "Get out."

"Yes, I'll get out," said the other, "but there'll be some nice reading in the papers to-morrow. Men don't send fellers like Jim Mosely away with eighty thousand dollars' worth of New York drafts for nothing. Oh, you're a great schemer."

"I'll have you in prison if you say a word of what Mosely has been telling in his drunken moments," said Sheldon. "I am not afraid of you, but I don't care to have my name mentioned in connection with the ravings of a drunken man."

"Your name won't protect you," shouted the other. "You and Mosely tried to rob the banks of eighty thousand dollars."

"You lie!"

The messenger sprang upon the attorney.

They fought like tigers for a moment, and then Sheldon reached the bell rope and pulled it.

In a moment hurrying footsteps were heard in the hall, and then the door swung open.

The servant who had been sent to his room a short time before, stepped inside and struck the messenger a terrible blow with his fist.

The fellow staggered back, caught hold of the portiere to save himself from falling, and finally went down, tearing the heavy fabric from the rings above as he did so.

The detective stood revealed in the bright light of the room.

Sheldon started back with an oath.

The messenger was too badly injured by the blow and the fall to rise to his feet.

The servant sprang toward the detective.

"Down with him," roared the attorney. "He came here to rob me."

As the fellow sprang forward, Nick struck at him, but his foot became entangled in the folds of the portiere, and the man was upon him before he could dodge out of the way of his bull-like rush.

As they grappled, the servant gave Nick a blow which would have settled the contest right there had it been delivered with as much judgment as violence.

The detective knew that a blow at such close quarters would not do much towards relieving him of the fellow, so he grasped him by the throat and tried to shut off his wind.

But the fellow's throat was iron-hard and muscular, and even the strong fingers of the detective made but little impression upon it.

Sheldon had selected a fighter in picking out a servant.

The two men twisted, wriggled, and bumped from side to side, while the attorney stood helplessly by.

He had no doubt that his man would win in the end.

At last Nick twined his foot about his opponent's leg and threw him.

He fell heavily, striking his head hard against the corner of the doorway.

Nick went down with him, still clinging to his muscular throat.

They rolled about, each endeavoring to keep uppermost.

Finally, by a lucky accident, the servant got on top and placed his knee on the detective's breast.

"Now will you give in?" he demanded.

"Kill him!" shouted Sheldon.

While the fellow waited for his answer, Nick got his fist free and struck his antagonist under the chin.

His teeth came together with a click like the snap of a rifle trigger, and it was plain that his neck was nearly dislocated.

Then the detective gave a sudden heave, and threw the fellow off.

A moment later they were both on their feet.

Then Sheldon began to see that it was necessary for him to be moving.

He rushed to the hall door and shouted at the top of his voice.

"Help! help!" he cried. "There are robbers in the house."

A noise was heard upstairs, and Sheldon turned to his champion.

"Hold him," he said; "you will have plenty of help soon."

The messenger, who up to this time had remained quiet, arose to his feet and reached for a weapon.

"You insulted me a moment ago," he said, scowling at Sheldon, "but I don't mind helping you out."

Things began to look decidedly blue for the detective.

He could not afford to be taken captive there and dragged before a police justice in the morning.

There was no doubt that he would come out all right, in case he chose to reveal his identity, but he did not want to do that.

Such a course would destroy all hope of detecting the millionaire fraud.

Beside the electric business, on which he had started in, he now had the New York drafts to look up, and Chapin's interest to protect.

By starting in on a comparatively insignificant case, in order to please a friend, Nick had got entangled in a case which promised to be a most important one.

He preferred to pose as a burglar for the time being, and make his escape from the house if possible.

He backed away toward the front door.

As he did so the door opened softly, and the head of the hackman was thrust inside.

Suspicious of the character of his employer, the fellow had followed Nick to

the house, and had been waiting outside all the time.

It will be remembered that the detective had entered the hack as a fashionably dressed young man, with a smooth face, and had alighted as a mechanic with a heavy beard.

This, of course, had excited the suspicions of the hackman.

Then the detective had appeared a short time after leaving the hack with an unconscious man in his arms.

The hackman was sure he had caught a burglar.

As he opened the door he seized Nick by the shoulder.

"Come wid me," he said.

Nick saw that it was useless to talk to the fellow.

Quick as a flash he whirled and struck out with his right, landing the fellow on his head in the porch.

The servants, headed by Sheldon, now sprang forward, but the door was open, and Nick bounded out.

"After him," shouted Sheldon. "A hundred dollars to the man who brings him back."

But Nick was too quick on his feet for the slow-moving servants, and in a moment he was out of sight in the darkness.

He made his way toward the hack.

He wanted to get Chapin out of the reach of the attorney.

But the hack was not where he had left it.

The suspicious driver had moved it to another place before following the detective to Sheldon's house.

CHAPTER IV.

MOSELY AND THE DRAFTS.

It was after midnight, and the officer in charge of the night detective detail at the city hall sat in his room wondering whether it wasn't about time to go to bed.

As he lit his fifth cigar the door of his apartment opened, and the night clerk made his appearance.

"Man out here asking for you," he said. "Shall I send him in?"

"Who is it?"

"Some mossback."

"What does he want?"

"Some robbery case. I suppose some of the boys have been doing him. He looks green enough for anything."

The officer was tired of doing nothing, and he told the clerk to admit the fellow.

The next moment a sprightly old man, with long white hair and whiskers, and tinted spectacles, entered the room. The officer pointed to a chair.

"Well, uncle," he said, "what can I do for you?"

The visitor tossed a card on the table, took a cigar from the box in front of the officer, and sat down.

The officer sprang to his feet.

"Nick Carter!" he exclaimed. "What brings you here?"

"Business," replied the detective.

"I didn't know you were in the city."

"Came in yesterday," was the reply, "and got into a terrible muss the first thing."

"Another murder case!"

"Not so bad as that," replied Nick.

"I am after one of your first citizens."

The officer laughed.

"I hope you'll get him," he said.

"Has anything peculiar in the shape of robbery been reported to-night?" asked Nick.

"No, nothing peculiar in any shape," was the reply.

Nick gave a sigh of relief.

"Then I am in time," he said.

"What is it?"

"Unless I am very much mistaken in my man," was the reply, "you will hear the story at first hand before long."

Just then the outer door opened again.

"Another visitor," said the clerk.

The officer was about to decline an interview, but Nick motioned to him not to do so.

"Let him come in," he said. "Present me as one of your men, and, unless I tell you differently, put me on the case."

"You're a queer fellow," laughed the officer, "but I suppose you must have your own way."

"I think," said Nick, "that the man in the other room is the man I am looking for."

The officer motioned to the clerk to admit the visitor.

In a moment Mr. Ashley Sheldon entered the room.

Nick signaled to the officer that the man was the one he had been expecting.

"Can I see the chief?" asked Sheldon.

"The chief is in bed," was the reply. "What can I do for you?"

"I have a peculiar case to report," said Sheldon, glancing uneasily at the seeming old man.

"Never mind Mr. Sweet," said the officer. "If you have a case, he may have to work it, so don't be annoyed if he asks questions. It is a way he has."

Nick thanked the officer with a smile, and drew his chair nearer to the table.

"This afternoon," began Sheldon, "I purchased New York drafts to the amount of eighty thousand dollars."

"Quite a large amount," said Nick.

Sheldon glanced sharply at the detective and went on.

"These drafts I gave to James Mosely, with instructions to proceed to Michigan immediately, and negotiate for the purchase of certain lots of pine land."

"Was that judicious?"

Sheldon turned half angrily toward the detective.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Was it judicious to entrust him with the drafts before the bargain was completed?" replied Nick.

"I can't tell the story if I am to be in-

interrupted," said Sheldon. "Besides; nothing has been said tending to show that the bargain was not completed."

"Was it completed?" insisted Nick.

"Hardly; but then, you know, pine land must occasionally be bought on the jump."

The detective glanced significantly toward the officer.

"Go on," he said.

"Well, Mosely is a clever fellow, but he drinks. Once a year or so he gets on a spree, which lasts several days."

"I have heard of such cases," said the officer, with a smile.

"Instead of proceeding to Michigan, it seems Mosely proceeded to a club house known as the C. O. D., and got drunk."

"How much money did he have," asked Nick.

"One hundred dollars and the drafts."

"Were the drafts indorsed?"

"Certainly not, but he had authority to indorse them in my name."

Again Nick glanced at the officer.

"Well, he got drunk. Go on."

"Yes, he got drunk and went to gambling."

"And lost the drafts?" asked the officer.

"Yes, he lost them. I don't know whether he lost them in a game, or whether they were stolen from him."

"Well?"

"He sent word to my house that he had lost them, and I am now on my way to find him. I should like the assistance of an officer."

"Very well," said the officer. "You may take Mr. Sweet."

Sheldon looked annoyed.

"Wouldn't it be well," he said, "to send a younger man?"

He had evidently taken a great dislike to the alleged Mr. Sweet.

"I have no other man handy," replied the officer.

Sheldon arose to his feet.

"That is a good reason for sending

him," he said. "Are you ready?" he added, looking toward Nick.

"I shall be ready," was the reply, "as soon as I consult in private with my superior officer."

Sheldon left the room and Nick closed the door.

"So that is your man?" asked the officer.

"Yes. I knew about the affair before I came here, but wanted an excuse to be with him."

"Where did you learn of the affair?"

"At Sheldon's house."

"You know him, then?"

"Certainly."

"What is there of it?"

"I guess the drafts have disappeared, but I think there is a scheme back of it all."

"What sort of a scheme?"

"A scheme to beat some bank."

"You surprise me. Why, Ashley Sheldon is worth a million."

"So I hear," was the cool reply, "but you will hear more about him during the next few days."

"Do you want any help on the case?"

"No. I think I can work it best alone."

"It seems to be a very important matter, Mr. Carter," urged the officer.

"Well," said Nick, "I have worked important cases before. The fact is, I am not satisfied in my own mind about this affair."

"Then you'd better have help."

"Not at present. It is charged that the man Mosely was in a conspiracy with Sheldon to beat some bank, as I said before. Now, I can't say whether there is anything to the charge or not."

"But how was the scheme to be worked?"

"It could be worked in only one way—by having some one cash the drafts, claim larceny, and make the paying bank lose the money."

"Ah!"

The officer made a hasty note and looked at the detective keenly.

"So you think the drafts have not been stolen?" he said.

"Oh, yes, they have been stolen. That is, unless they were cashed yesterday afternoon, and I don't think they were."

"Well, let me know if you want any help," said the officer.

"It may be," said Nick, "that some of your officers will run upon the drafts. In that case, do not give them to Sheldon. I know a man who ought to have them, as they were doubtless bought with money paid in for his benefit."

"The plot deepens," laughed the officer. "Well, keep me posted."

Nick turned away and accompanied Sheldon to the street.

The two men entered a hack and turned south.

In a short time they were at the C. O. D. club.

It was situated in a fine building on State street, and the lighted windows showed that business was still in full blast.

The place, although run in the name of a club, was little better than a first-class gambling house.

It was open day and night, and drinks were always to be had.

Sheldon entered the steward's office and asked for Mosely.

He seemed to be well known there, for all the attendants bowed respectfully to him.

"Mosely is in one of the back rooms," said the steward. "He has been asking for you."

"Where's Hendershaw?" asked the attorney.

"He's in the next room," was the reply, "and he wants to see you before you go to Mosely."

Sheldon turned away.

When he reached the door he noticed

that the seeming old man was close behind him.

"I want to talk with the manager of the club in private," he said, with a frown.

"That's just what I don't want you to do."

Sheldon started back.

"You are impertinent," he said. "You must remember that I am not under surveillance."

"How do you know what my instructions are?" asked Nick.

He saw that he would have to make a strong bluff in order to accomplish his purpose.

Sheldon looked both frightened and annoyed.

"I shall report you to the chief in the morning," he said.

"I can't help that," was the reply. "I must obey orders. I am not here to watch you, but to hear everything that is said about the robbery."

Sheldon looked relieved.

"Very well," he said. "With that explanation, you may hear what he says."

The attorney opened the door, and both men stepped into a brilliantly lighted room.

Hendershaw, the manager of the club, sat at a table counting a pile of silver.

"Good-evening, Mr. Sheldon," he said, rising.

"What has been going on here tonight?" demanded the attorney, in an angry tone.

The manager looked inquiringly at the seeming old man.

"He's all right," said Sheldon. "You need not fear to talk out before him."

"Friend of yours?"

Sheldon hesitated.

"One of my attorneys," he finally said. Hendershaw seemed satisfied.

"I suppose you came to see about the Mosely matter," he said.

"Yes. What is there of it?"

"Well," said Hendershaw, slowly, "the fellow was robbed here."

"Was he drunk?"

"Yes; very drunk."

"Did he play cards?"

"Yes."

"How did he lose the papers?"

"He was imprudent. He lost money playing, and tried to put up one of the drafts for more money."

"Did he succeed?"

"No."

Then Nick struck in.

"Were the drafts indorsed?" he asked.

Sheldon leaned forward eagerly. The detective thought he was trying to tell the manager what answer to make.

"They were not," he replied.

"Are you sure?" asked Sheldon.

"Yes; I am positive."

The attorney looked relieved.

"That helps me out," he said, "for the fellow had authority to indorse them with my name."

"Yes, that helps you out," said Nick, "for the drafts are of no earthly use without your name on the back of them. Any one who negotiates them now must commit the crime of forgery, and the bank which cashes them will lose the money."

"The man he was urging to loan him money on the papers did not like to do so unless the drafts were indorsed," said the manager.

Nick saw that the fellow had taken his cue from the attorney.

"While Mosely and the other were discussing the matter, a party of young fellow rushed into the room and began to pull the men around in a half drunken manner."

"Yes."

Nick waited for Sheldon to ask for a description of the men, but he did not do so.

"He doesn't want me to hear that part of it," he thought, "but I can find out later on."

"When the young men left the room the drafts were missed," continued Hendershaw, "and in a moment all was confusion."

"Did you see the young men again?" asked Nick.

"No; before I could learn the facts of the case and take a look through the rooms they had disappeared."

"And they were all strangers?" asked Sheldon.

"I thought so," mused Nick. "Sheldon don't want to have the young men named or described."

"Have you now told all you know about the matter?" asked Sheldon, after Hendershaw had made the desired answer that the three men were all entire strangers.

"Yes," was the reply. "You can learn the rest from Mosely."

Mosely was too drunk to talk much.

After trying to get some explanation of his conduct from the fellow, Sheldon turned away in seeming disgust.

But the detective caught a gleam of satisfaction in the bold eyes of the attorney.

"You are up to some deep game here," thought Nick, "and you have succeeded in temporarily puzzling me."

CHAPTER V.

NICK GETS INTO TROUBLE.

Nick saw that he could get no more information at the club house.

He was satisfied that Sheldon was working a double game, and knew that the case must be won by following him.

He was anxious about Chapin, and wanted to know if the scheming attorney had found him in the cab, and if so, what he had done with him, but he could not leave Sheldon long enough to trace him.

"I can't stay here all night on such a case as this," he finally said. "I'll go to

bed, and you can report at the city hall in the morning."

Again a look of satisfaction lighted up the face of the attorney.

"I am sorry to lose you," he said, "but perhaps it is just as well that I should continue my talk with this man alone."

Nick went down stairs and sought a cheap lodging house not far off.

He was out of sight of the entrance to the club rooms but a short time.

When he returned to the foot of the stairs he had a perfect fitting suit of clothes on, and seemed to be very drunk.

He looked and acted exactly like a "rounder" out for a good time.

Presently Sheldon came down stairs and started north.

Then he turned east to Wabash avenue, and finally entered a building which seemed to be an apartment house.

Nick crept up the stairs after him.

Sheldon stopped at the second floor and tried a door.

It was locked, and the transom above revealed no light inside.

"Where can the fellow be?" Nick heard him mutter. "He ought to have come straight here."

"Now," thought the detective, "he's after one of the young men who rushed into the club room just before the drafts disappeared."

"He didn't want the manager to describe them, because he wanted to keep me in the dark."

"It is as plain as day that Sheldon knows where those drafts are."

"Still, I can't understand his scheme at all."

"Why should he give one man such work to do, and then get another man to take the job off his hands?"

In the meantime Sheldon was kicking and pounding at the door.

"The fellow may be playing me

crooked," he muttered. "I'll haunt this place until I find him."

Presently the attorney went down stairs and stood in the entrance hall.

"Now," thought Nick, "if he goes away, shall I follow him, or shall I stay here and size up the fellow he is so anxious to meet?"

After some thought, Nick decided to remain.

When Sheldon walked away he crept up stairs again and applied his handy little picklock to the door.

It opened easily, and the detective found himself in an ordinary "furnished room."

His quick eye took in every detail of the place.

A small trunk, locked and strapped, stood beside the door, and all the hooks and shelves about the little room were empty.

The bed had not been disturbed.

"It is plain," thought Nick, "that the fellow has just moved in."

He looked under the bed and inspected the little closet carefully.

"Yes," he repeated, "he has just moved in. A man packing up to change lodgings would be sure to leave a litter on the floor. There are no discarded articles or bits of paper here, so it is plain that he has just taken the room."

A half-consumed match lay on the floor not far from the door, and Nick picked it up and examined it.

Then he placed his hand on the gas burner.

"It is not ten minutes," he thought, "since this room was occupied. Ah!"

This exclamation was caused by the discovery of a bit of paper in the bottom of the otherwise empty slop bucket.

It was a piece of an envelope.

One corner bore the printed card of Ashley Sheldon.

"There was some talk about the drafts being in an envelope," mused the detec-

tive, "and the chances are that this is the one."

Then a folded paper caught the eyes of the detective, and he unfolded it.

It proved to be the *Herald* of the morning before.

A small slip had been cut from one of the pages.

The matter above and below the cut showed that it was a railway time table that had been removed.

"If I only knew the arrangement of the time cards in the *Herald* of yesterday," thought Nick, "I could very easily tell which road the occupant of this room intends to favor with his patronage to-day."

Next the detective examined the trunk, but there was no name or mark of any kind on it.

It was a new trunk.

"The scheme they are working was well laid, at all events," thought the detective.

Just then a noise at the door attracted Nick's attention.

A key was inserted in the lock, and the knob was suddenly turned.

But the door did not open.

There was something the matter with the lock.

Nick crept up to the door and listened. Presently he heard a voice outside.

It was Sheldon.

He was muttering to himself, and uttering curses on the door and the absent occupant of the room.

Then Nick heard him spring up and catch on the casing of the door.

He was trying to gain entrance through the transom.

Presently a door opened farther down the hall, and a woman's voice called out:

"What do you want?"

"I want to get into this room."

"It is not your room. Go away, or I'll call an officer."

"I am to stay here with my friend to-night," Sheldon replied.

"Your friend came in a little while ago and went away again," said the woman.

"I wish he would stay away. He only came to-day, but he acts as if he owned the block."

"How long ago did he go away?" asked Sheldon.

"About ten minutes. You are the second one who has made a disturbance in the hall since he went away."

"I was up here once before," said Sheldon.

"Well, don't come again."

The woman banged the door and went into her room.

Sheldon moved away down the hall.

When his footsteps had died out, Nick inserted his picklock again and turned it.

Before he opened the door, however, he turned and made a private mark on the trunk.

"If I had time," he thought, "I'd search it now, but the fellow may return, and I'll have to do that at the depot."

When Nick moved the door, a door behind him opened very softly.

It was a door connecting with another room located in the front of the building.

Nick had observed the door, but had not giving it a second thought.

He did not hear it open.

The slide was now over his dark lantern, and he saw no one advancing toward him in the darkness.

He had no means of knowing that every movement he had made in the room had been watched.

As he moved through the doorway he received a savage blow on the back of the head, and fell to the floor.

Then, with a quick motion, he was drawn back into the room and the door closed and locked.

The detective tried to spring to his feet, but his limbs refused to answer his will.

The man who had dealt the blow now lit the gas and turned toward the prostrate detective.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, with an oath.

"I don't seem to be doing much of anything just now," replied Nick, coolly.

"What did you come into this room for?"

"To see what I could find. Is it your room?"

Before replying, the fellow bent over and tied Nick's hands and feet in a very workman-like manner.

"Is this your room?" repeated Nick.

"No."

"Whose room is it?"

"It belongs to my chum. Just moved in."

"Where is your chum?"

"Look here," said the fellow, eyeing Nick suspiciously by the light of the blazing gas flame, "you ain't no sneak thief."

"Thanks," replied Nick.

"If you came here to steal," continued the fellow, "why didn't you bust open that trunk?"

"Never thought of it."

"You're lying to me," said the captor, "and I've a good mind to give you one in the neck."

"If you'll let me up," replied Nick, "you can try that if you want to."

"Want to fight, eh?"

"I'm not particular," replied Nick, wondering how it was that one blow had placed him so completely in the fellow's power.

"You didn't tell me what you came in here for," said the captor. "Perhaps I'll let you go if you tell."

"I came in here to see what I could get," replied the detective. "I told you that once before."

The fellow glanced hastily around the room.

"You didn't take anything, did you?" he asked.

"No. There was nothing to take, only the trunk, and that was too heavy."

"Well," said the fellow, slowly, "I think I'll go out and get a policeman."

"Hurry up," said Nick.

The truth was that Nick was in a great hurry for the fellow to act.

Once at the police station he would be released at once, and would be at liberty to pursue the clew upon which he was working.

His only fear was that the man would delay until the occupant of the room returned.

"You don't seem to be much afraid of the coppers," said the man, bending over Nick with a look of cunning on his face.

"See here," said Nick, "you have no right to keep me here in this manner. Either let me go or call an officer. If you let me go, I'll give you ten dollars."

"That settles it," said the fellow. "Out you go."

He began to loosen the cords as he spoke.

"For a long time," he said, "I've been the only square man in my crowd, and it ain't a fit. Now I'm going crooked. Get up."

Nick arose to his feet, but his hands were still tied.

"Is the occupant of this room crooked?" he asked.

"Yes, he's so badly bent that it's a wonder his head don't drag on the ground when he walks."

"What does he do that's crooked?"

"Never you mind what he does that's crooked. I wish some one would come along and give me twenty dollars for turning you over to the coppers. I ain't getting money enough out of this."

"Hurry," said Nick, "and I'll give you twenty dollars."

"All right."

While the fellow fumbled at the knots

the sound of footsteps was heard on the stairs.

"I guess that's Dick coming," said the fellow, pausing in his work to listen.

The footsteps ascended the stairs and advanced up the hall.

The detective strained at the cords with which his hands were tied behind his back, but could not break them.

"Oh, you're tied fast enough," said the fellow, with a grin. "I used to be a sailor."

"Hurry up," said Nick. "I don't want to have that man see me here after my trying to rob him."

Just then the sound of the footsteps ceased, and then another person was heard ascending the stairs.

The fellow stepped to the door and looked out.

In a moment he drew his head inside with a jerk and shut the door.

Then he turned down the gas.

"It ain't Dick," he said.

"Who is it?"

"Some dude that came here to see him once before."

The detective knew what that meant.

The man was Sheldon!

The second person was now heard advancing along the hall, and presently voices were heard.

"Where have you been?"

It was Sheldon's voice.

"I have been attending to business," was the reply.

"I thought you had gone back on me."

"No; I had trouble in getting away from the gang."

"That is false," said Sheldon. "You were here once before to-night, and went away again."

"That's right," was the reply. "I left the fellows down stairs and ran up for a moment."

"Did you get the papers?"

"Of course."

"You did well."

"Did you come down town to watch me?"

"No; Mosely sent for me."

"Oh, he did? Well, he was drunk enough to do anything."

"Come," said Sheldon, "let's get inside and talk the matter over."

Nick beckoned to his captor to draw nearer.

"I'll give you a hundred dollars," he said, "if you'll hide me somewhere within sound of their voices."

"I'm increasing in value every moment," was the reply. "I guess I'll hold on for a rising market."

Nick struggled at his bonds again.

Outside, the men were already at the door.

Nick's captor turned the gas clear out, and started for his room, keeping his hand in the detective's collar as he did so.

The detective marched along readily enough.

He was waiting for the proper moment to come.

As the fellow closed his door the two men in the hall opened their door.

For a single instant the noise blended together.

That was the instant Nick had been waiting for.

Quick as lightning he sprang from the floor.

Both of his feet struck his captor in the breast.

He fell to the floor like a log. Nick's first act was to back up against the door and turn the key, which had been left in the lock. Then he listened.

"What was that?" asked Sheldon.

"The rattling of the door," was the reply. "This old barn of a house is not fit to live in, but I'm only here for a day."

"But I thought I heard another sound."

"I noticed that. Echo, I guess."

The detective was still struggling with

the rope, which held his hands like a vise.

In the dim light shining through the windows he saw a dresser at one side of the room.

"There must be matches there," he thought, walking toward it.

There were plenty of matches, and the detective seized one in his hand, pushed a chair up to the gas jet and stepped up into the seat.

Then, always working behind his back, he struck the match and turned on the gas.

In order to make the job more secure, the fellow had placed each wrist in a loop, the two loops being connected by a short piece of rope.

This was one reason why all Nick's efforts to wrench his hands apart had failed.

Had they been tied in one knot, the enormous strength of the detective might have stretched the rope so that one hand could have been slipped out.

The manner in which he had been tied now, however, made the burning of the rope over the gas jet less painful than it would otherwise have been.

His wrists were two inches or more apart, and while the flame burned and blistered the flesh terribly, no very serious injury was done.

In a very short time Nick's hands were free.

His first act was to bandage his wrists so as to protect the burns from the air.

All this had occupied but a moment's time.

Nick had heard the two men in the next room talking all the time, although during the burning process he had not paid much attention to what they were saying.

He now drew a chair to the door, and listened intently.

"I tell you it's all right," he heard the man who had been called Dick say. "The

man will put up the stock for the drafts, and then the other fellow will put up the cash for the stock."

"How long will all this take?" asked Sheldon.

"It can all be done this forenoon."

"And then you must get out."

"I must do nothing of the kind. They know at the club that one of six men got the drafts. If I should light out now they would all say it was I. That's too thin."

"But you will be recognized here."

"No, I won't. You ought to see the make-up I have when I go down in the country."

"What time does the train leave?"

"Eight o'clock."

"Then you ought to be back here long before the bank closes, with the stock."

"I guess I can."

Then the men moved away from the door, and Nick could not hear all that was said.

He was certain, however, that he heard the name of Chapin mentioned more than once.

As the detective stood at the door listening, the man he had knocked down began moving about uneasily on the floor.

He was fast regaining consciousness.

Nick stepped back toward him, but he was not quick enough to prevent his swinging one arm out and knocking over a chair.

It fell to the floor with a terrible crash.

The next moment Sheldon was standing at the door opening into the hall, while Dick was trying to get in by means of the door connecting the two rooms.

"What's up, Nate?" roared the latter.

"Nothing. I tipped over a chair."

Nick spoke in a disguised voice, but it did not deceive the sharp ears of the man on the other side of the door.

"Let me in," he said.

In the meantime Sheldon was asking for admission at the other door.

Then, to render matters more compli-

cated, Nate staggered to his feet and called out to his friend to break in the door.

Nick sprang toward the hall entrance. The key was in the lock on the inside.

"Look out," shouted Nate. "He's going through the hall door."

Nick opened the door and sprang out upon Sheldon.

In a second Nate was on his back, striking with all his might.

The detective threw both men off and dashed down stairs.

"Who was it?" panted Sheldon.

"A burglar," replied Nate. "He was in the next room and I caught him, but he got the best of me, and has been here ever since."

"It's a detective," said Sheldon. "We must make haste out of this place."

"Well," said Dick, "you will find me at the Northeastern depot."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRESIDENT WANTS HIS MONEY.

"Wake up, Boyd."

It was five o'clock in the morning, and Nick was pounding at the electrician's door at the Palmer House.

He made so much noise that the employees of the hotel were gathering in the hall when Boyd's door opened and the detective stepped inside and threw himself into a chair.

"You look tired," said Boyd.

"I never get tired when I have a good case," said Nick, "and this is a lulu."

"What have you found out?"

In a few words Nick explained everything that had taken place since parting with Boyd at the club.

"You have had a lively time," said Boyd.

"And here," said Nick, "is twenty thousand dollars. Put it in the hotel safe for me."

"By the way," said Boyd, "what do you think has become of Chapin?"

"He is undoubtedly all right, although Sheldon may have him where he can use him again as he did last night."

"Yes, he has no motive for doing him any harm, except financially," replied Boyd. "The case is a strange one all the way through, and my poor little electric case seems to have been lost sight of entirely."

"I'll attend to that," replied Nick, "as soon as I settle this matter of the drafts."

"I don't see what Sheldon is up to," said Boyd. "I'm completely at sea in regard to the drafts."

"I think I have it all figured out," said Nick.

"Well, tell me about it."

"First," said Nick, "this man Sheldon is hard up."

"Yes."

"He has eighty thousand dollars belonging to the Chapin estate in his possession, and wants to make some ready money out of the act."

"Of course."

"He plans to have the drafts bought with the money cashed by another person at some distant bank, and then make it appear that the drafts were stolen, and his signature forged."

"Yes."

"Well, he does a sharp bit of work. He wants to make a sure thing of it so that he will not be suspected of lying when the statement is made that the drafts were stolen."

"Of course."

"So he takes Mosely into the scheme, sends him out with the drafts, and sends another man to rob him of them."

"Why should he do that?"

"Because he wanted a noise made about the robbery at the very time it took place. See?"

"Yes, I see. Do you think Mosely knew he was going to be robbed?"

"Certainly not. Sheldon did not let him into that part of the scheme."

"But it seems to me," said Boyd, "that the noise made about the robbery would prevent any one cashing them. Sheldon even reported the robbery to the police."

"Ah," replied Nick, "but Sheldon had a place to put the drafts before they were bought. The intending purchaser lives somewhere out of the city, and will know nothing of the game until he finds out that the drafts are no good."

"I see. And that is why they are to meet at the Northwestern depot at eight o'clock this morning?"

"Yes, the man called Dick is going out to place the drafts."

"I'd like the fun of going with them."

"Well," replied Nick, "I don't know but you had better go. I have a little business in the city with Mr. Sheldon."

"You think he won't go?"

"I think the fellow is crowded for money, and will have to stay in the city and hustle. Remember that he was trying to get money of one of the club members last night."

"It was said that he wanted it to-day, wasn't it?"

"Yes, so you see the fellow is in some kind of a pinch."

Boyd dressed and took the money down to the office, where it was placed in the vault, and a receipt taken for it.

At eight o'clock both Nick and his friend were at the Northwestern depot, at the corner of Wells and Kinzie streets.

Sheldon was nowhere to be seen.

Nick did not know the man Dick by sight, and the chase promised to be a long one.

"It is evident," said Boyd, "that Sheldon is not going out into the country this morning."

"It wouldn't do for him to go out," said the detective. "He would not dare

have anything to do with placing the drafts. I had an idea, however, that he would be here to see that his man Dick got away all right."

Nick, disguised as a negro, wandered about the depot until nearly train time without seeing anything of his man.

Presently a hack stopped at the Kinzie street entrance, and a young man got out.

Then the detective heard Sheldon's voice, speaking from the hack.

"Get back on the noon train if you can," he said.

"I think I can do that easily enough."

The voice was that of the man he had heard talking in the room on Wabash avenue the night before.

The detective motioned to Boyd, and walked away.

"There they are," he said, when a quiet place had been reached.

"You think you will not go," asked Boyd.

"No, it won't do for me to leave the city," said Nick, "but you will have some one with you."

Boyd looked at his friend in surprise. Nick laughed.

"When I left you a little while ago," he said, "I went to the city hall and got a detective. You must not seem to know him until you get away from here."

"But I don't know him," said Boyd.

"He is sizing you up now," replied Nick, "and will make himself known at the proper time."

"And he will be on hand to make the arrest?"

"Yes, but don't rush matters. We want the drafts as well as the men. Understand?"

"I shall leave it all to him," replied Boyd.

In a short time Dick went into the depot, and Sheldon was driven away.

Nick recognized the hackman as the man with whom he had done business the night before.

He followed the hack to Sheldon's office, where the attorney got out and passed up stairs.

The hackman did not drive away, and Nick knew that Sheldon would soon make his appearance again.

While he waited, Mosely, looking very tough, went into the building. He had evidently been out all night, and had been drinking to excess.

After a short time Sheldon and Mosely came down stairs and entered the hack.

They were driven directly to the offices of the Carrier Creek Lumber and Salt Company.

There Sheldon got out, and Nick heard him say to his companion:

"Now go to the house, and remain there until you hear from me."

The detective rushed away, made a quick change in costume, and took a carriage for the Sheldon residence.

"Now," he thought, "I'll see what I can do in the way of solving the electric light mystery."

Then he thought that he might possibly need help there, and ordered his driver to take him to police headquarters.

"If I only had Chick here," he thought, "I wouldn't have to bother the Chicago officers."

In the meantime Sheldon entered the private office of the lumber company and found himself face to face with the president of the corporation.

"You are here early," said the attorney, with a smile.

"I have been here all night," was the cool reply.

"Here all night?" repeated Sheldon, turning pale.

"Yes," was the reply, "I have been going through the books."

"Well, what do you find?"

"I find that you need more than eighty thousand dollars to square yourself."

"That is unfortunate," replied Sheldon, coolly.

"Unfortunate? You use a mild word, Mr. Sheldon," said the president, grimly.

"I say unfortunate," answered Sheldon, "because I have just had a great loss which will delay me for some days."

"What is the loss?"

"After I left here yesterday I bought eighty thousand dollars worth of New York drafts, intending to purchase securities with them."

"Couldn't you buy the securities with money?"

"Yes, but I did not want to keep the cash in my possession."

"Well, what became of the drafts?"

"They were stolen from my agent last night."

"Too thin."

"Oh, you will see how thin it is," said Sheldon. "They were stolen from a club house on State street, and I received word in the night. The police have been working on the case ever since."

"How does all this affect me?"

"You will have to wait for your money until the bank will issue new drafts."

"I refuse to wait, sir," said the president, sternly.

After transacting some trifling business at the office, Sheldon went away, and took a hack for home.

"I shall come out all right yet," he muttered. "If Dick makes his point, I shall have plenty of cash before night, and have the drafts as well."

CHAPTER VII.

HOW IT ALL CAME OUT.

Just about the time Sheldon was leaving the office of the lumber company a man in a workman's suit walked up the steps of the Sheldon residence and rang the bell.

He carried a dilapidated valise in his hand, and, as he walked, there was a great clanking of tools in the valise.

When the door was opened the workman took off his hat.

"I come from Mr. Sheldon," he said. "I am to fix some of the pipes in the basement and look over the wires in the house."

The servant was the same one with whom the detective had had the struggle the previous night.

He glanced at the workman suspiciously.

"I always attend to those things myself," he said.

"But Mr. Sheldon sent me," insisted the workman.

"Where did you see him?"

"At the office of the Carrier Creek Lumber and Salt Company," was the reply.

"What did he say?"

"He said for me to tell Andy it was all right," replied the detective, with a knowing wink.

"Andy is my name," said the servant, "and I suppose you must come in. Is Sheldon coming up before long?"

"He didn't say."

The servant conducted the detective to the basement, and sat down to watch him.

That was not what Nick wanted.

He was there to find Chapin, if possible, and to find out where the electricity, with which the house was well supplied, came from.

He could do nothing with Andy watching him.

He examined the furnace, sounded on the pipes, and traced one or two lines through the place.

Andy remained by his side.

There was only one thing to do.

He must get the best of him, and lay him away somewhere until he could search the house.

But he was saved this trouble.

Before long they heard the sound of angry words above, and Andy started

away, saying that he would send another man down in a moment.

The other man was Mosely.

Nick did not fool with him long.

Before he had been in the basement ten minutes Nick had him under the influence of a drug which was likely to keep him quiet for some time.

Then the detective crept up stairs.

The servants seemed to be working in the back part of the house, and Nick got to the second floor without difficulty.

He crept from room to room, until he found one door that was locked.

This he opened with his pick lock, and stepped inside.

There, lying on the bed, was Chapin.

Nick felt of his pulse, listened to his breathing, and bent over to see if there was any trace of chloroform or any other drug about him.

There seemed to be none, and the pulse, although faint, was not in bad shape.

He was evidently enjoying a natural sleep, after an exciting night.

There was a table in one corner of the room, and the detective advanced to it.

It was covered with scraps of paper, upon which much figuring had been done, and Nick examined every particle patiently.

The persons doing the figuring had evidently been computing interest, and the amount upon which the calculations had been made was eighty thousand dollars.

"Sheldon and Chapin have been working together," thought Nick. "I wonder whether Sheldon got a receipt for the whole amount?"

Presently the detective came upon a blank receipt.

It had been spoiled in making, and had been torn in two.

Only one word was decipherable, and that was the word "eighty."

"I guess Sheldon has made good use of his time," thought the detective. "I

wonder if I had better wake Chapin and find out about it?"

He finally decided to do so, and stepped toward the bed.

Then he heard a step in the hall, and a voice called out:

"Has any one been in this room?"

It was the voice of the servant, Andy. Nick could not hear the reply.

"Well," continued Andy, "I'll go in myself as soon as I come back."

The detective looked around for a place of concealment.

There was absolutely no hiding-place in the apartment.

Nick heard Andy walk away.

Then he opened the door a trifle and looked out. The way was clear, and he crept along the hall and made his way to the basement again.

He had barely reached the large room where the furnace was located when he realized that he had been followed.

There was a small cell-like room in one corner of the place, and Nick hastened into this, taking his tools with him. Once there, he lit his lamp and appeared to be very busy with his work of inspecting the pipes.

The next moment Andy appeared in the doorway.

As Nick turned about to speak to him the heavy door was slammed in his face, and locked from the outside.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

"It means," shouted Andy, "that I have caught a sneak thief."

Nick did not reply.

"I followed you up stairs," said Andy, "and saw you go into the room where our guest is sleeping. What did you get in there?"

Nick remained silent.

"Then," continued Andy, "I called out to warn you and get you down here. How do you like it?"

"I don't like it."

"You'll have to stay here until Mr.

Sheldon comes home, whether you like it or not," said Andy.

"And then what?"

"Oh, you may get hungry and thirsty before you get out, that's all I can say now," was the reply.

Nick was, indeed, in serious trouble.

It was very important that he should be at liberty when Sheldon returned.

He had instructed the detective secured at the city hall not to arrest Dick, but to allow him to make the deal he was to make and then follow him to the city, first warning the man who had taken the drafts that they were worthless.

He knew that Dick would not go to Sheldon's office with the stock for which the drafts were to be exchanged, because Sheldon could not afford to have him seen there.

Therefore, the chances were that he would meet Sheldon at the house as soon as he could do so after reaching the city.

Then, if the detective obeyed orders, the case would end right there.

Nick's idea in having the matter settled at the house was to have Chapin present when Sheldon was shown up.

He had never had any doubt that Chapin was still at the attorney's residence.

Besides, this would give him a chance to solve the electric lighting puzzle in the presence of the detective.

The whole thing had been admirably planned.

But this new move was likely to spoil everything.

While he pondered over the matter, he heard Sheldon's voice on the other side of the door.

"What did you come here for?" asked the worthy.

Nick did not reply.

"I had trouble enough with you last night," continued Sheldon, "and you must expect no mercy now. It is your life or mine."

Then the detective heard Sheldon giving instructions to Andy.

"You stay right here and watch this door," he said, "until I call you away."

"Better let me fill the sneak full of lead," said Andy.

"It may come to that," replied Sheldon, "but not now."

Then Sheldon went on up stairs and sought Chapin's room.

He found that gentleman walking the floor impatiently.

He looked excited, and glanced keenly at Sheldon as he entered.

"Any track of the robber?" he asked.

"No," was the reply. "It's a strange thing that a man could be robbed of twenty thousand dollars in this neighborhood without a soul witnessing the deed."

"Well, I'm twenty thousand dollars out, just the same," said the young man.

"What will my people say?"

The young man evidently did not suspect anything.

"The robber was considerate," said Sheldon, "for he took you to a hack. That, if you remember, is how I came to find you."

"It is a strange case."

The two men talked together for a long time, and then a loud ring at the door called Sheldon away.

As he supposed, the man waiting there was Dick.

"Well?" he said.

"I got the mining stock," replied Dick.

"And got away all slick and clear?"

"Yes. I thought once I was followed, but was mistaken. I wore a rig that would have done credit to a preacher."

"Then you changed your clothes after you left the depot?"

"Of course. It was when I came out of the room where I changed that I thought I was watched."

"Where did the man go when he got the drafts?"

"He had other men waiting for him,

and kept right on doing business. Can you place the stock to-day?"

"You must do that, and do it at once. I have been watched, if you have not, and have a sneak locked up in the basement now."

"The devil."

Just then there was another ring at the door.

"Andy is watching the detective," explained Sheldon, "and so I have to tend the door myself."

The attorney left the room, and presently returned, accompanied by an elderly gentleman, who glanced quickly around the room as he entered.

"This man comes from the chief of police," Sheldon said. "He wants to know more about the drafts."

Chapin arose and started out of the room.

"I'll just wander around a little while," he said, "and return."

He had been gone but a few moments when Andy entered.

"Who is doing your work while you are away?" asked Sheldon.

Andy looked up in surprise.

"Why," he said, "Chapin told me you wanted me to attend to the door."

"He misunderstood me," said Sheldon, hastily. "Go back."

Andy hastened away.

The conversation about the drafts was again interrupted in a moment.

Andy came in and called Sheldon outside.

"Chapin is not there," he said, "and there is something strange about the door. I can't unlock it. It acts as if the lock had been tampered with."

Sheldon started toward the basement.

Then another ring came at the door, and he went back to receive the newcomer.

It was the president of the lumber company.

"I want to see you in private," he said to Sheldon.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a third ring came.

This time a middle-aged, farmer-looking gentleman, accompanied by a man who looked like a country merchant, was shown in.

"I want to see Mr. Sheldon," the former said.

Sheldon, followed by Andy and Chapin, stepped into the room from the hall.

The country merchant moved around toward the door.

"I bought some drafts of you to-day," he said, addressing Sheldon, "and I want to know why the bank will not cash them."

"Of me?" gasped Sheldon.

"Of your man. They bear your name."

"I sent out no drafts," said Sheldon.

"Oh, yes, you did," said the farmer, "for I saw you part with your man at the depot."

The merchant laid down the drafts.

"Give me my mining stock," he said.

The president of the lumber company stood looking on like one in a dream.

"I have no mining stock," said Sheldon, turning white.

"This man Dick has it," said the seeming farmer.

Sheldon sprang forward with an oath.

"What business have you here?" he demanded.

"By the way," drawled Chapin, "that looks like the man I just let out of the basement."

Sheldon was now ghastly pale.

"It is a conspiracy," he gasped.

"It looks like it," said the seeming farmer. "While you are about it, you may as well produce the receipt for twenty-thousand dollars Mr. Chapin gave you last night."

"What do you know about my affairs?" shouted Sheldon. "Get out of my house."

"You see," said Nick, turning to the

president of the lumber company, "Sheldon paid Mr. Chapin twenty thousand dollars last night, in this house, and then, by the exercise of a strange influence known as hypnotism, caused him to give it back."

Chapin started toward the attorney.

"So that is the way I was robbed?" he said.

"That is the way," said Nick. "And the way Mosely was robbed was not far different."

"Mosely can speak for himself," said Sheldon.

"No, he can't," said Nick. "I put him to sleep in the basement a little while ago."

"Who are you?" asked Sheldon.

"I am Nick Carter," was the reply, "and I have had quite a dance with you since last night. You had me dead to rights down on Wabash avenue once, but I got out."

"Yes," sneered Sheldon, "and you sneaked into my house last night in disguise."

"Of course I did. I came here to find out who was furnishing your place with electric light, and found out about the draft scheme. I have been hard at work ever since."

"Tell me about it," said the president.

Then Nick told the whole story, about as it has been told in these pages.

"And he steals his light from the company," he concluded.

"The part relating to me is all true," said Dick. "I thought I was followed."

"You were followed," said the city detective, who had been masquerading as a country merchant. "Don't I look like the man you sold the drafts to?"

"Exactly," said Dick.

"Well," said Sheldon, "the drafts are good, anyway."

"They will be," said Nick, "when you indorse them."

"But they are indorsed," said the president.

"Forgery," said Nick. "The bank upon which they are drawn would have been notified not to pay them. They are supposed to have been stolen."

Then the elderly gentleman who had first entered spoke up.

"I have warrants for you, Mr. Sheldon," he said.

This time Nick looked surprised.

"The chief thought best to send me up here," said the detective, "and I swore out the warrants in order to protect myself."

Sheldon sat down and wrote his name on the drafts, and handed them to Chapin.

"They were bought with your money," he said. "Now tell me how you came to let this man, Carter, out of the basement."

"I followed Andy down stairs," was the reply, "and heard what he said to him. I was becoming suspicious, and thought I'd talk with the imprisoned man. So I sent Andy away and let him out."

"And a good job you did," laughed Nick. "I have been caught three times in this case."

There was another ring at the door, and Boyd was shown in.

"I couldn't wait any longer," he said, addressing Nick. "Did you find out where he gets his light?"

"Yes," said Nick, with a laugh, "he steals it from you."

"You see," said Boyd, turning to Sheldon, "if you had paid for your light you might never have been caught."

"Yes," said Nick, "you were caught by an electric current, if ever a man was."

"I told him he'd get caught," said Andy.

The officers started away with Sheldon and Dick, while Nick went into the basement and got Mosely.

The president of the lumber company

went away in a rage, for the shortage in Sheldon's books was likely to become a permanent one.

Both Sheldon and Dick received long terms, while Mosely got off with a shorter sentence by helping the officers untangle the case when it came on for trial.

"It was a short case," said Nick, "but a warm one. Now I'll take in the great fair. If you have any more millionaire frauds, keep them out of my way for a few days."

"I won't trot out another," laughed Boyd, "until I can start you in on another electric current. It counted in this case."

"Well," said Nick, "we've bagged an old offender. He was formerly known as 'Slick Pete' in New York."

[THE END.]

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